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SUBJECT: POLICE TO LOSE CIVIL SERVICE STATUS AND GAIN
SALARIES, BENEFITS, AND PRESTIGE

SALARIES, BENEFITS TO BE ON PAR WITH OTHER SECURITY FORCES

1. (U) Head of the National Police Ali Tounsi announced November 5 the next phase of the National Program for Police Development, which aims at improving the work conditions and overall situation of police. The Program, originally envisioned as necessary to bolstering recruitment, which was in severe deficit with respect to national need during the terrorism years of the 1990s, aims at putting an end to abuses within the ranks, cleaning up the image of the police, and improving work conditions. The public is increasingly concerned by rising crime, and the professionalization and hiring of police is in part a response to those concerns. In this latest phase, the police will no longer be part of the civil service, according to press reports of Tounsi's remarks. Tounsi added that police will begin earning salaries and benefits commensurate with the other security forces, such as the army and the national gendarmerie. Without civil service protections, though, the police will also be more accountable to the public. Under the Program, the police are expected to expand their mandate from large urban areas in favor of smaller communities and rural areas with the goal of creating greater national uniformity of police protection for all Algerians. The police, Tounsi stressed, will still remain under the authority of the Ministry of Interior.

HOUSING ALLOWANCES AND NEW HOUSING UNITS PLANNED FOR POLICE

2. (U) While the amount of salary increase is unclear, Embassy police contacts and media sources predict that it will be significant, if not considerable. The cost to state coffers could also be hefty, since under the Program the ranks of police are expected to grow to 200,000 officers by 2009, up from approximately 120,000 today. In addition to unspecified salary allowances for housing, officers are also expected to benefit in 2006 from the construction of exclusive housing for police and their families. These changes in housing benefits will require Parliament's approval of the new budget. The entire financial and reform package would not have been possible absent the support of President Bouteflika, who firmly supports its elements, according to Tounsi.

INCREASE IN MORALE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW

3. (SBU) The morale of Algerian police, according to police sources who spoke to the Embassy on the condition of anonymity, has traditionally been low due in large part to humiliating work conditions, squad cars in poor condition, low salaries, and insufficient pensions. Unlike the army, according to these sources, police officers do not benefit from state-provided lodging or a lodging stipend and often earn only 13,000 AD per month (\$110), even though the police are on the front lines of confronting rioters, the ills of society and social tensions in general. According to press reports, the morale of police officers gathered around Tounsi at the time of his announcement jumped sharply as they welcomed the news.

ERDMAN